Forgotten Time and Valued Space: Montage Narrative in Republican Chinese Women's Literature

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Abstract—In the West, montage was originally practiced in avant-garde movements. Although montage was widely discussed in the Western context since its origin, this concept is also connected to the literature and culture of modern China in a certain way. Among the Republican Chinese writers, many women writers attempted to employ montage narrative in their creative writing. These writers transformed the montage narrative into a gendered one and used it to also secretly realise their attack on male neotraditional ideology. As a narrative strategy, montage provides a narrative possibility for women writers to deconstruct the prevalent discourse on gender roles, and to construct their identity, meanwhile conveying their innovative and unique understanding regarding feminism and modernity in modern China.

Index Terms—montage narrative, Republican China, modernism, women's literature

I. INTRODUCTION

Montage may be generally counted among the principal artistic strategies in modernity, and its impact has been involved in various disciplines, among which the most being widely mentioned is the film. The concept of montage became a popular technique in the film industry by the 1930s. Coming from French, montage means "to mount" or to raise up, and the word is still used in film production where it simply means, "editing". It was discussed in literature and culture more broadly by Walter Benjamin at that time (Benjamin, 2008).

In the field of literature, the concept of montage refers to the conjoining of heterogeneous discourses in a given text. From the narratological perspective, the deployment of montage signals a shift between narrative voices and sometimes, something like Gérard Genette's extradiegetic narrator. In this way, once montage is understood in narratological terms another historical peculiarity of the fiction may be identified.

Although montage was widely discussed in the Western context since its origin, this concept is also connected to the literature and culture of modern China in a certain way. The association between montage and modernist writing might be considered as an attempt to differentiate one type of writing from other types at that time.

Among the Republican writers, many women writers attempted to employ montage narrative in their creative writing. They seem not to be concerned with chronological sequence in their writing; rather, they indulged in the establishment of a sense of space. For women writers, what they attempted to do was to challenge the recognised world view through constructing unconnected time-streams that might explain the essence of existence. Additionally, montage as a narrative strategy provides a narrative possibility for women writers to deconstruct the prevalent discourse on gender roles, and to construct their identity, meanwhile conveying their innovative and unique understanding regarding feminism and modernity in modern China.

II. DEFINITION OF MONTAGE IN LITERATURE

As we know, montage in the West was originally practiced in avant-garde movements such as Cubism, Dadaism, and Surrealism, so the concept of montage in the field of literature refers to the conjoining of heterogeneous discourses in a given text. Indeed, we may find that not all literature is organised in accordance with the methods and the values of continuity editing, and some instead employ a very different approach in part or a whole, that is, montage. According to Linda Costanzo Cahir, montage editing (in literature or film) is the rhythmic cutting of sentences or shots based on images and emotional responses in relationship to one another. Rather than arranging the paragraphs or shots in accordance with narrative progression, as continuity editing does, montage creates its stream of shots or paragraphs based on the associational relationship of one image to another (Cahir, 2006, p.52).

Many scholars agree that modernist montage in literary works derives from the visual montages of Futurism and Dadaism. It is undeniable that from these modern movements, the practice of montage in literature to some extent adopts formal liberties such as syntactic contractions and breaks, or visualisations through an emphasis on typography as well as the exhibition of words as images and sound (Cahir, 2006, p.53).

To be specific, in a literary text, the writer assembles events and scenes situated in different time and space into one dimension, thereby transcending the limits of time and space to deliver the jumping and disordering nature of human

consciousness across time and space. Dispersing among the textual structure, the employment of montage tends to playfully dissect language itself, breaking down conventional syntax and semantics in the process. Thereby, this kind of skill favours ambiguity, irony, and paradox over narrative unity or totality.

From the narratological perspective, the deployment of montage signals a shift between narrative voices and sometimes, something like Gérard Genette's extradiegetic narrator. In this way, once montage is understood in narratological terms another historical peculiarity of the fiction may be identified. For instance, the 1929 novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* by Alfred Döblin was widely used as an example to criticise the deployment of montage as a modernist literary technique from the narratological perspective and to "contextualise montage as a narratologically innovative phenomenon which eliminates the figure of the controlling fictional narrator" (Slugan, 2014, p.65).

Overall, the usage of montage in a literary text always puzzles the reader with its fragmentary structure, but as a matter of fact, in this process, the author conveys his or her understanding of the logic of events scenes and characters, presenting a certain system of values which shows that the montage is connected with one certain external ideology.

A. The Relationship between Montage and Stream of Consciousness

When it comes to the concept of montage in literature, it is necessary to clarify its relationship with the stream of consciousness.

Although sometimes SOC and montage are often used interchangeably, they should not be equated completely. SOC itself in literature can only be presented by various techniques including montage, whereas montage itself not only can appear independently in a text but also can be a significant narrative strategy to present the stream-of-consciousness phenomenon. In this sense, we can say that montage and SOC partly overlap (Figure 1):
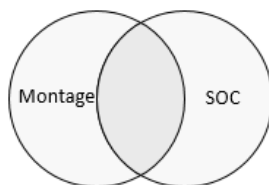

Figure 1

In fiction, writers can use montage to construct different space frames. As for presenting the stream of consciousness, montage has a different manifestation. For example, according to Melvin Friedman, montage consists of time montage and space montage: "Time montage means the protagonist can think about the past, present and future things at the same time. Space montage means the fiction can show different spaces at the same time" (Friedman, 1955, p.168).

B. Montage in Modern Chinese Literature

Although montage was widely discussed in the Western context since its origin, this concept is also connected to the literature and culture of modern China in a certain way.

In early modern China, some artists and critics such as Lu Xun, once held a belief in montage as a new vehicle for cultural production and communication (Macdonald, 2007). Also the New Perceptionists, a group of writers in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s that includes Liu Na'ou, Shi Zhecun, Mu Shiying, and Ye Lingfeng, occasionally used "montage" to convey a cinematic quality in the writing of their group. For example, it is commonly known that Shi Zhecun attempted some new types of modern literary techniques in his writing, among which montage was one of the ways he used the most. Shu-mei Shih (2001) notes the use of screenplay terminology in Ye Lingfeng's works, and "the fluid movement of a film camera" in Mu Shiying's works. She argues that Mu used montage in several stories, such as "Gongmu" (Public cemetery, 1933), in which many scenes employ montage. For instance, in a scene outside the nightclub, a rickshaw puller in between the Studebakers and Fords, and a pan-shot of people in the city engaged in pleasure and deceit contrasted immediately with the death of a labourer at the construction site. Next, the camera moves from one venue to another without any connection, and the montage is organised around the central image of the eyeballs of the female character, Mrs. Liu, all the time.

In another short story, "Yezonghui li de wuge ren" (Five people in a nightclub, 1932), Mu also makes use of montage, "juxtaposing seemingly irrelevant events occurring at the same time for a combined, associational effect" (Shih, 2001, p324). In this work, specifically, the energy of the street is conveyed in a stream of words and sentence fragments of montage effect, in which lines are from advertisements, conversational snippets as well as newspaper headlines. The writer's camera-eye pans slowly across several city streets, pausing on a woman applying lipstick, a neon sign, shops and cinema, zooming in to find its target (Mu, 2008).

To some extent, the association between montage and modernist writing might be considered as an attempt to differentiate one type of writing from other types at that time. It may be said that defining the text as "montage" or SOC types privileges them as technically experimental and therefore different from more conventional realist fiction.

III. NARRATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF REPUBLICAN WOMEN'S WRITING

Many Republican women writers seem not to be concerned with chronological sequence in their writing; rather, they indulged in the establishment of a sense of space.

In Fu Lei's (1908-1966) wide-ranging 1934 essay, "Wenxue duiyu waijie shijie de zhuiqiu" (Literature's pursuit of the reality of external world), he vividly linked the aesthetics of fragmentation and juxtaposition to geographical space and considered montage in his discussion (Fu, 2000). According to Fu Lei, the particular importance of montage in the pursuit of the modern world's reality lay in its ability to "create spaces and subjectivities on the peripheries out of fragmented, transmitted, and juxtaposed images of different places and times" (Fu, 2000, p.219).

It is undeniable that breaking the chronological timeline or using montage narrative was not exclusive to women writers amongst Republican Chinese literati. So, what I would like to highlight is rather the way in which women writers convey their contemplation of the suppression of women's idealism against the milieu of an unchanged society by taking advantage of the narrative and making it prevalent amongst women intellectuals. These writers transformed the montage narrative into a gendered one and used it to also secretly realise their attack on male neotraditional ideology.

Next, I would like to explain these two main characteristics in a broad sense regarding their montage narrative.

A. The Forgotten Time

It has been ascertained that the establishment of a sense of space in stream-of-consciousness fiction is independent of the absence of a time sequence. Moreover, we should also recognise the point of existence itself, no matter the break or uncertainty of time flow in the narrative. Hence, before exploring the notion of spatial form, I would like to look at two kinds of specific practice for the unorthodox temporal sequence.

1. The Discontinuity of Time

The first temporal type is the discontinuity in the narrative, which can be found in many Republican women writers' literary works. For example, in *Shengsi Chang* (*The field of life and death*, 1935), Xiao Hong arranges a series of discontinuous time sequences, taking advantage of the ordered but jumping seasons to depict the decade, within which there exist two aspects of discontinuity: the skipped seasons, and the interval years in between. Although seemingly the arrangement of seasons is according to the sequence of the regular four seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter, the fact is that the ordered seasons do not happen in one year but across several years, and sometimes the season in question is also unclear or absent. Similarly, the arrangement of the years always has uncertain intervals in between, and the length of the interval is left unspecified. In this way, the narrative is provided with relative independence of time, clinging to specific events and scenes.

According to the logical relationship between these events, the time sequence is supposed to be coherent before the ninth chapter in *The Field of Life and Death*, as these story events just happened in one year, while from the ninth chapter to the eleventh chapter, the timeline appears interrupted. It seems that the ninth chapter should follow the eighth chapter, but it seems that there is a particular time gap in between them, and the exact number of years in the gap cannot be confirmed. Following this, the eleventh chapter jumps a decade, and the season of the tenth chapter is indeterminate.

Xiao Hong boldly interspersed a few fragments across ten years of past events, so that the coherent time sequence is presented through several pieces. Thus, time lacks its function as an organising structure for the writing. As Zhao Yuan (1987) comments, *The Field of Life and Death* depicts a four-season flow but it does not take advantage of this implied time sequence to promote the plot. What occupies the framed picture is simply scenes that are depicted skilfully. Similarly, Chen Sihe (2004) argues that in Xiao Hong's works, it is difficult to figure out clues about time. Although seemingly the author arranged some temporal symbols, when reading through it, the reader would always feel that the narrative leaps about all the time, and sometimes several scenes appear simultaneously. It seems that Xiao Hong is fairly skilled at performing her narrative art on the same plane. What Chen describes in terms of the leaping characteristics of this work refers to the SOC phenomenon, and this sort of leaping and omission should be considered as a deliberate arrangement conducted by the author. In a certain sense, the temporal fragmentation is also associated with the strengthening of moments. The author ignores the temporal continuity of narration, and thereby she spends fewer words on the depiction of characters themselves as well as on the event itself. Instead, what she highlights is every extracted moment. In these fragmentary moments, the characters' feeling and consciousness regarding life and death are also magnified. In this way, every moment seems shocking. In the third chapter, for instance, Xiao Hong takes advantage of a whole event to represent one season, that is, Old Mother Wang (*lao Wangpo*) had to take her old horse to the slaughterhouse for the sake of paying the rent to the landlord. The narration is powerful enough to convey the character's feeling. Also, it seems that only autumn can represent the farmer's tragedy. For the readers, it might seem a triviality, while for the character, Old Mother Wang, selling her horse to the slaughterhouse is a big event of that year. Such a single event makes the scene seem more substantial and the narration more powerful. The narrator selected this clip on the time scale using a magnifying glass so that the concept of time disappears and the moment is framed instantly.

In the performance form of montage narrative, the discontinuity of time often occurs. The change of temporal continuity might also be an implication of the transformation of the cognition of human experience. For women writers, what they attempted to do was to challenge the recognised world view through constructing unconnected time-streams that might explain the essence of existence.

2. *The Uncertainty of Time*

The other temporal form that appears often is the uncertainty of time. In the short story "Ye" 夜 (The night, 1941), for example, Ding Ling (1904-1986) obscures the temporal sequence.

Despite the title of the short story seemingly indicating that the plot takes place in a single night, the intermittent memories within the character's interior monologue and the narrator's FID from time to time means that the chronology is very complexly interwoven, making it hard for the reader to work out the time when events take place. In this way, the whole plot mainly centres on the stream of consciousness of the male character He Huaming through his relationship with the three women in the short story: Qingzi, Hou Guiying, and his wife. As a low-level cadre (*jiceng ganbu*) who is not totally released from productive work, He Huaming's inner ideology is described through vivid narration. He feels that the people's new world and people's new "life consciousness" (*shenghuo yishi*) can only be regrown by transforming "Old China" (*jiu Zhongguo*) (Feng, 1982). The temporal uncertainty provides a flexible, unpredictable space for the character's inner awareness when tackling everything around him, especially grappling with his impulses towards love and sexuality.

Qingzi, an attractive young girl, is the first woman mentioned in the text. Her unexpected appearance makes the narrative seems like a "camera" juxtaposing her appearance with the opening scene, and this kind of montage appears repeatedly. Obviously, He Huaming cannot help being attracted by Qingzi's youth and pretty looks, and this temptation is so great that he forgets all about his unpleasant work. However, a dramatical paragraph of interior monologue in the form of free direct discourse betrays his obsession with class; in his eyes, a landowner's daughter is supposed to be guilty and promiscuous. Finally, his solid faith in revolution and politics overcomes his emotion. At this time, He Huaming's consciousness begins to flow in a disorderly fashion, and his wife first appears in the narrative. A series of flashbacks let us know that he is a matrilocal son-in-law (*daochamen*) and his wife is twelve years older than him. Their children passed away one after another, and after a time they never had a child again. In this fragment of montage, the narrator ignores the existence of time. The forgotten time, to some extent, implies the unchangeable social plight and the characters' unhappy fate. He Huaming's wife should be an ever-present role throughout her invisible timeline; however, in He's eyes, she is just "a woman who can cook three meals a day". Compared with the other two women characters, his wife seems like a thoroughly tragic person. From the perspective of appearance, she's not as young and pretty as Qingzi. Here, the narrator does not depict how she looks directly. Instead, the author employs an FID from the perspective of the husband — he cannot put up with his wife's "half-bald foretop" and her "scarred pale hands". In the following narrative, she is portrayed as a discontented woman all the time, not only complaining about He Huaming but also expressing her dissatisfaction with her fate. Indeed, this character whose name is never given is one of the few female characters depicted as a thoroughly negative and tragic image in Republican women's literature. For He Huaming, his wife is excluded from both his revolutionary and sexual needs.

The third woman is his revolutionary comrade Hou Guiying, and this character reveals the author's thinking in terms of the relationship between revolution and love. For the temporal sequence, her montage-style entry in the story breaks the timeline of the narration, and we know that it happened one time when He Huaming was feeding his cow. Her sudden appearance frightened him, but it was certain that he had thought of having relations with her from a long time ago, so her seduction made him "feel horrible stuff grow in his body", and "he almost tried to do a scary thing". He Minghua's restraint of his sexual impulses accords with his identity as a competent revolutionist. Surely, it was because Hou Guiying was also a primary-level cadre that He was attracted to her. Sharing the same political norms lead to them being subject to the same political rules. Deviant behaviour was not allowed inside the revolutionary camp, especially for a female cadre. Although both of them struggled in their married lives, they had to endure this as getting divorced would be criticised and have a negative impact on promotion.

Similarly, in the opening paragraph of the short story "Qiao" (Bridge, 1936), the author Xiao Hong employs the method of repeated narrative to realise an obscure temporal effect:

> In the summer and fall, the water that collects under the bridge is level with the sides of the ditch.
> "Huang Liangzi, Huang Liangzi, the baby's crying!"
> Late at night or early in the morning, these were the shouts that came from the bridgehead. For a long time! As time went on, the people who lived at the bridgehead became well acquainted with the sound and grew accustomed to hearing it.
> "Huang Liangzi, the baby's hungry! Huang Liangzi… Huang… Liang…zi."
> Especially on rainy evenings or on a windy morning, in the midst of a solemn quiet, this sound echoed off the water under the bridge or was reinforced by the gusting wind as it carried into distant homes.
> Huang…Liangzi. Huang… Liang…zi, sounding like the refrain of a song.
> The moon had disappeared below the horizon, leaving one lonely star hanging in the western sky.
> Huang Liangzi emerged from the open field east of the bridge.

In this fragment, we see that the author uses free direct discourse, free indirect discourse, and montage creating a sense of ritual for the female protagonist's coming into sight. Regardless of the season or the time of day, Huang Liangzi is likely to appear at the bridgehead after being summoned by her master. A similar narrative mode appears in the story many times. If we say that the discontinuous time to some extent still belongs to the linear narrative, the temporal uncertainty makes us completely forget this concept, and we may always feel lost in the process of reading.

However, it is this kind of fragmental time that allows the characters' consciousness to be foregrounded.

B. The Valued Space

As mentioned above, many Republican women writers seemed committed to the establishment of a sense of space in their writings rather than being preoccupied with chronological events, and this spatial focus is frequently found in montage narrative. In many cases, we find that the characters' interior monologue or free indirect discourse emerges at moments of unexpected transformation of space, thereby, on the whole, exhibiting a special type of stream of consciousness.

This notion of spatiality has been generalised as "spatial form" in Joseph Frank's seminal essay of 1945, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature", in which his basic argument is that modernist literary works, such as those by Joyce and Proust, are "spatial" insofar as they replace normal narrative sequence "with a sense of mythic simultaneity" and disrupt the normal continuities "with disjunctive syntactic arrangements" (Frank, 1991, p.281). We can see that the proposal of "spatial form" in essence challenges the temporal nature of literature. Inspired by Sergei Eisenstein, Frank argues that the juxtaposition of disparate images in a cinematic montage automatically produces a synthesis of meaning between them, which supersedes any sense of temporal discontinuity. Frank's idea establishes a clear link between "spatial form" and modernism.

Surely, there is no point to proving that a given female writer was the first to take advantage of the so-called "spatial form" or to use montage technique in Republican China; after all, these Western concepts had not yet emerged and of course not been introduced into China. However, many of women writers upended the traditional hierarchy of form and content in the literary narrative criteria espoused by mainstream critics. Unlike most New Literature male writers, the powerful strident call for change was prevalently not the choice of women writers, who opted instead for a more fluid narrative style. They did not hasten to remove themselves entirely from their creation but rather allowed themselves to hide inside it, becoming an invisible presence behind their work. Montage as a narrative strategy, or rather the establishment of "spatial form", provides a narrative possibility for women writers to deconstruct the prevalent discourse on gender roles, and to construct their identity, meanwhile conveying their innovative and unique understanding regarding feminism and modernity in modern China.

1. The Juxtaposition and Synchronicity of Space

In stream-of-consciousness literature, we may find that amazing coincidences often happen at any time, but are they simply the story plots randomly arranged by the author, or do they convey some hidden meaning? From the narrative perspective, the coincidence can be concluded as two patterns of "spatial form": juxtaposition and synchronicity. Through the very act of juxtaposition, according to Joseph Frank, "past and present are seen spatially, locked in a timeless unity which, while it may accentuate surface differences, eliminates any feeling of historical sequence" (Frank, 1991, p.652). Similarly, the synchronicity represents the structural integrity in the aspect of narrative logic (Jung, 2012). Both of them are forms of rebellion against conventional linear narrative, breaking the flow of time, which can be commonly applied into SOC novels in order to link the past and the present (Wang, 2014).

Among Republican women writers, the ones who often preferred this technique include Lin Huiyin, Xiao Hong and Eileen Chang. For example, Lin Huiyin's "In Ninety-nine Degrees of Heat", Xiao Hong's *The Field of Life and Death*, Eileen Chang's *Qingcheng zhi lian* (Love in a fallen city, 1943) and "Chuangshiji" (Genesis, 1945) all feature this kind of juxtaposition.

In "Chuangshiji", for instance, Eileen Chang settled spatial juxtaposition through the characters' memories, thereby highlighting their respective psychological change. The coincidence of spatial juxtaposition always happened even though in different spatio-temporal settings. The short story contains two main spaces: one is the home the character lived in as an unmarried girl (*niangjia*) and the other is the husband's house after getting married. Yingzhu and Ziwei were separate female protagonists in these two spaces; Ziwei was Yingzhu's grandmother. For these two spaces, Eileen Chang did not simply set the women into two physical spaces but endowed each with their respective cultural implications. The author artfully puts them into a juxtaposed structure using the memory of daily life as a linking point, and in this process, a montage narrative with multiple dimensions is shown.

The elusive montage scenes plus free indirect discourse always makes the narrative obscure, and readers may feel lost and confused about the relationship between the characters, especially under, as here, the situation without any markers or transformation signs between the past and present in the different spatio-temporal settings. Under such circumstances, the tragic ending of the love stories of various female characters becomes their main connection. Yingzhu searched for love for the sake of love, and she met Mao Yaoqiu, a rich and handsome man and supposedly an ideal marriage target for Yingzhu. Gradually, Yingzhu found that Mao was a playboy. However, even though Yingzhu knew that he lived with other girls, and that one of the girls was pregnant, Yingzhu still chose to pursue a relationship with him. When Mao Yaoqiu made clear that he was no longer in love with her, Yingzhu had to break up with him. Another female protagonist, Ziwei, as Yingzhu's grandmother, seemed like an overpowering woman completely controlling her big family. She also experienced an unhappy love and married life. Although she was born into a prominent family with a prestigious background, she still could not escape from the tragic fate of being forced to marry a strange man. After getting married, she found that her husband behaved badly and had so many bad habits that she had to sell her personal property in order to keep the family afloat. For a long time, she was treated poorly by her husband's

family. Sadly, she then treated her daughter-in-law and her granddaughter in a similar way. In the plot, there is also another female character of whom not much detail is given, namely Yingzhu's mother, or Ziwei's daughter-in-law. The scene where she first appeared in the short story was in the kitchen. For one thing, she was required to manage all the household affairs; also, her husband began to feel an antipathy against her because of her aging. More sadly, her mother-in-law, Ziwei did not show any concern or love for her.

In the beginning, the narrative centres on Yingzhu's story. The sudden transformation of space takes place when the perspective shifts to Ziwei's past through an old photo. In Ziwei's history, there appears another layer of spatial juxtaposition: her parents' home where she lived as well as her husband's home where she lived after getting married. Also, the ancient Chinese zither song "Yangguan sandie" (a parting tune with a thrice-repeated refrain) was also a bond of spatial juxtaposition. The first time that Yingzhu listened to this song was when she was young, so it was part of her own experience; for her, it represented her feeling when leaving home due to her childhood trauma. However, similar experiences shared between Yingzhu and her grandmother did not make them close. When the song appears for the second time, Ziwei showed her indifference. For her, it might be just a song she had heard in the past. The strangeness and alienation between Yingzhu and Ziwei could be glimpsed through this song.

In a SOC text, this kind of heterogeneous juxtaposition is a pervasive pattern for presenting a montage narrative. Besides, in other short stories, such as Lin Huiyin's "In Ninety-nine Degrees of Heat" and Eileen Chang's *Love in a Fallen City*, this pattern appears. In "Ninety-nine Degrees of Heat", the author juxtaposed the scenes about females and the poor, managing to simultaneously reveal their living conditions. In this way, when "female" and "the poor" come into the narrator's view at the same time, these two symbolic words are linked together. Indeed, both groups were underprivileged without the right to manage their own destiny. In this way, Lin Huiyin rethinks the implication of the female subject in the process of negotiating with modernity. By contrast, sometimes the two juxtaposed spaces alternate in the narrative. For example, in Eileen Chang's *Love in a Fallen City*, Bai Liusu's different feelings towards Bai's Mansion in Shanghai and Repulse Bay in Hong Kong alternate to create a juxtaposed effect.

2. The Repetition of Narratives

Apart from the spatial juxtaposition, the repetition of narratives, mainly certain ways of behaving or types of discourse, is another common way in which "spatial form" is built up, referring to the events or discourse with similar properties recurring in the works.

For example, in "Xiao Liu" (1935), Xiao Hong takes advantage of repetitional narratives to describe the sad story of Xiao Liu and his parents struggling with their life. Living in poverty and oppressed by vicious powerful landowners, they had to move house many times, so Xiao Liu's mother decided to take Xiao Liu to commit suicide. In this short story, the mother's calling for Xiao Liu, like, "Liu… Ah! Xiao Liu…Ah! Liu…", appears six times, interwoven in between different scenes.

To be specific, the first three times that the female protagonist calls are from the scenes when they move house. The repetition of the mother's calling not only implies her reliance on her son but also highlights the child's ceaseless toil in this process. The last three instances of calling happen when they are driven out of the house by some authoritative vicious power, and we can see that the fourth calling achieves the transformation of two different scenes. Through the direct discourse: "Don't squeeze me! Move to the inside a little bit, my leg hurts!", it can be determined that the former scene happened when they slept one night, and the latter scene happens when they are driven out of the house, and at that time Xiao Liu's father is not at home. Similar montage narrative appears again after the sixth time of her calling in the narrative, when the scene jumps to another night when they are asleep.

The author resorts to a cinematic narrative, without attention to the interiority of its characters; rather, what she emphasises is not only the tension in the relationship between this underprivileged family and the powerful, authoritative class but also the inferior position of the female protagonist and her inequality with her husband. This type of montage narrative also demonstrates one of Xiao Hong's favourite subjects: the impotence of the individual under tremendous pressure, regardless of whether that pressure comes from society or from the family. Although the narrative is fragmented into different scenes through the montage style, the repeated appearance of the same calls of the female protagonist realises the unity and indicates the short story's ideological meaning.

In addition, it is noteworthy that Xiao Hong's received for the first time an official evaluation from Lu Xun in early 1935. After Xiao Jun sent "Xiao Liu" to Lu Xun, he read it and recommended it to the magazine *Tai Bai* where Chen Wangdao (1891-1977) worked as the chief editor. Meanwhile, Lun Xun wrote a letter to Xiao Hong and praised her, saying that it was full of passion rather than merely playing with writing tricks (Gu, 2016). Although at that time Xiao Hong's writing was still not sufficiently mature, Lu Xun's praise was a great spiritual support and encouragement for her.

Through the analysis above, we find that the mode of repetition of narratives in novels forms a complicated relationship of tension with the fiction itself, which not only strengthens and multiplies the meaning of the fiction but also delays the readers' reading process, thereby making it constantly controlled or disturbed. Thus, it enables the linear expectations of fiction to be changed and at the same time intensifies the inherent conflict.

To some extent, the inner enclosure caused by the repetition of the expressional discourse does not accord with the aesthetic expectation of traditional realism. It was criticised for the absence of realistic suffering and was sometimes merely considered as women's hysterical random thinking (Lin, 2015). Hence, almost all women's writing of this

category did not at that time receive much notice and appreciation from mainstream critics. Not all of writings could survive and own the luck of "Xiao Liu". And, we have to admit that without Lu Xun's praise, "Xiao Liu" would probably also have been dismissed.

C. Montage Narrative in Xiao Hong's Fictions

Among Republican Chinese women writers, Xiao Hong used montage narrative most frequently. For instance, in the novel *The Field of Life and Death*, there is an example of parallel montage. From the outset, the narrator depicts a scene featuring a goat:

> A goat gnawed at the exposed roots of an elm tree by the side of the road.
>
> Elm trees had partitioned the long road out of the city into shady patches. Walking down it was like striding beneath a huge swaying umbrella that blocked out the sky.
>
> As the goat began gnawing on the bark of the tree, threads of saliva trickled down its whiskers. Caught up by the wind, they looked like soap lather, or sluggish, floating strands of silk. The goat's legs were covered with them. Huge scabs on the elm tree bore witness to how badly scarred it was. Yet the goat lay down to sleep in the shade, the white pouch that was its stomach rising and falling.

Then, the little boy appears, which seems like a direct shifting of the point of view: "A little boy made his way slowly through a vegetable plot. His straw hat made him look like a big mushroom. Was he hunting for butterflies? Stalking grasshoppers? Just a little boy under the midday sun." Following this passage, a farmer appears: "Before long a limping farmer also appeared in the vegetable plot. The cabbage patch was about the same colour as the goat." Then, the target of the narration returns to the little boy again: "Green-tasseled sorghum grew adjacent to the southern edge of the vegetable plot. The little boy wormed his way in among the sorghum, brushing against the tassels with his head and knocking them to the ground." After this passage depicting the little boy, the "camera" turns to the farmer: "The limping farmer had long since seen that it was his son, and from a distance, he hailed the boy in a raspy voice: "Hey, Tunnel Legs! Didn't you find it?" So only at this point do we learn that the farmer and the little boy are father and son, and that they have come out to search for their lost goat. Thus, it can be seen that the sequence of the first cross-montage picture refers to: boy — farmer (father) — boy — farmer (father) — farmer (father) and boy.

The character to appear in the narrative is Granny Pockface (*mamian po*). The scene is of her in a yard, washing clothes. This heavy household chore make her look awkward and indecent and she is depicted as a "comic stage figure" and a "she-bear". Along with Two-and-a-Half coming into sight again, we learn that Granny Pockface is his wife, the little boy's mother. One funny detail is that when Two-and-a-Half is cursing about the goat being stolen: "Damn…the son of a bitch", Granny Pockface mishears it and thinks that he is blaming her for not having prepared dinner yet. Then, all of them begin to search for the goat. At this time, the narrative suddenly shifts to the goat again:

> Still half asleep, it scratched itself with its horns. The leafy green of the trees turned its coat a pale yellow. A roadside melon peddler was eating his wares. The line of carts stirred up clouds of dust as it moved from the shade onto the road leading into town.
>
> The goat was lonesome. It had finished its nap and its meal of bark, and was ready to go home. But no, it wasn't heading home. It passed under the trees and listened to each whispering leaf. Might it be heading into town, too? Yes! It trotted off toward the road leading into town.

Thus, the action of the villagers looking for the goat and the depiction of the goat itself alternate in the narrative, forming the cross-montage narrative. This process ends up with a picture of the goat: "As for the wandering animal, it scratched itself from time to time in the shed, nearly knocking down the door, which banged noisily."

It can be seen that the sequence of the second cross-montage picture refers to: goat — goat searchers — goat — goat searchers — goat and goat searchers. It is interesting that when the goat has finally arrived back home by itself in the end, Two-and-a-Half and Granny Pockface were not aware of it, so Granny Pockface insists on searching for it regardless of her husband's dissuasion.

Through the cross-montage narrative, two things become apparent. The first is that the goat is of great importance to Two-and-a-Half and Granny Pockface. When Granny Pockface realises that she has lost her goat, she nearly breaks down in grief. As Hu Feng suggests "her rendering of the peasant's affection for their livestock (goats, horses, and cows) is so realistic and sincere that nowhere else in our corpus of peasant literature can we come across such moving poetry", Xiao Hong is skilled at capturing peasants' attachment to livestock and having this resonate with readers.

The second discovery is the contrast between the fate of animals and the fate of human through the montage narrative. Usually, humans are considered to be much more important than animals, and thus, animals are sacrificed and used to serve the needs of humans, which is also treated as natural and justified. However, in Xiao Hong's works, the life of humans is no better than that of animals, and often it is worse, especially for women.

While Two-and-a-Half and Granny Pockface struggle seeking for the goat, the goat is wandering and foraging leisurely. The use of montage narrative highlights the contrast effect even more intensely. Apart from Two-and-half and Granny Pockface and their goat, the depiction of other villagers and animals is also shown. To take another cross-montage fragment, for example, this point can be shown in the juxtaposition of Fifth wife's elder sister's labour that occurs simultaneously with a female dog's labour. As Fifth wife's elder sister's labour is made infinitely harder by her husband, who burns her and drenches her in cold water, a dog which is right next door experiences an easy, quiet, peaceful birth in a warm, sheltered barn with straw. In this respect, this incident may have a link with Howard

Goldblatt's idea regarding Buddhist and Christian influences on the author's creative writing. He notes that "in the first two chapters alone, the characters' appearance and actions are portrayed with the aid of animal images nearly twenty times. The visual effect of this device on the reader is substantial". As Goldblatt points out, animal imagery is one of the most striking features of Xiao Hong's language. Xiao Hong's language becomes distinctly powerful "when metonymy, as well as a metaphor, is used to evoke animals and humans contiguously so that the two species are joined in the homogeneous space of the body" (Liu, 1994, p.163). In this process, the narrative strategy of montage to a great extent benefits for strengthening the expression of the author's creative mind in this respect.

Similarly, in another work, the short story "Kan fengzheng" (*Look at the kite*, 1933), Xiao Hong also employs a cross-montage narrative strategy. The first chapter shows an old man returning home alone in the night, through which we learn about his suffering and miserable situation. Through a passage of FID, we know that the old man should have a son and daughter, however, unfortunately, his daughter died several days ago, and his son left home three years before.

The second chapter is about a young man named Liu Cheng. He was just set free from the prison and lives in a village. Through his revolutionary education (*geming jiaoyu*) for villagers, we see that Liu Cheng must be a revolutionary leader, which led to his being arrested. It seems that Liu Cheng's talking with villagers to some extent, influences them in a positive way.

The third chapter is the meeting point of these two characters. Liu Cheng lives in Aunt Wang's (*Wang dashen*) home, and through the conversation, we learn that Liu Cheng is the old man's son. So, Aunt Wang lets her husband inform the old man of this situation as soon as possible. In the following chapter, the focus turns back to the old man, who is lying alone on the broken bed. The fifth chapter is the interaction of these two narrative lines. The cross-montage narrative forms a tense atmosphere and a strong sense of rhythm, thereby causing a cinematic, dramatic effect. After learning of his son's release, the old man decides to go to Aunt Wang's home to find his son; however, when he arrives, Liu Cheng has already left: "Liu Cheng rushed away! He just left before his father's coming! His father's heart was broken! He was a monster, a wolf, a wolf without a heart!"

After that, the two intersecting narrative lines depart from each other again. In the last chapter, when the old man is watching children flying kites in the playground, he hears the news that Liu Cheng has been arrested. Although Liu Cheng and the old man are situated in different spaces, both of these two narrative clues intersect once more. In short, the cross-montage narrative lines can be presented as: the old man — Liu Cheng — the old man and Liu Cheng (son) — the old man — Liu Cheng — the old man and Liu Cheng (son).

Much like the filmic montage technique that could create a single "room" or space out of different spaces and times through the juxtaposition of different shots, cross-montage in literary works generates a spatio-temporal transformation in different dimensions, juxtaposing different moments regardless of the past, the present or the future.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the field of literature, montage refers to the conjoining of heterogeneous discourses in a given text. Although this concept was widely discussed in the Western context since its origin, it is also connected to the literature and culture of modern China in a certain way. For example, in early modern China, Lu Xun once held a belief in montage as a new vehicle for cultural production and communication.

Among the Republican Chinese writers, many women writers attempted to employ montage narrative in their creative writing. Xiao Hong, for instance, used montage narrative most frequently. They were not to be concerned with chronological sequence in their writing; rather, they indulged in the establishment of a sense of space. For women writers, what they attempted to do was to challenge the recognised world view through constructing unconnected time-streams that might explain the essence of existence. In addition, they transformed the montage narrative into a gendered one and used it to also secretly realise their attack on male neotraditional ideology. As a narrative strategy, montage provided a narrative possibility for women writers to deconstruct the prevalent discourse on gender roles, and to construct their identity, meanwhile conveying their innovative and unique understanding regarding feminism and modernity in modern China.

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